NAKHODKINSKIY PROSPEKT

*** 8 April / 1995/ No. 20 (231) retail price by contract ***

[photo]

EYEWITNESS

The case of "Trawler 423" continues

In issue 17 of Nakhodkinskiy Prospekt we reported specifically on a visit to the editorial staff by representatives of the Russian-American Commission responsible for resolving the fate of POW's. An investigator, James MacDougall appealed in particular through the paper to possible witnesses regarding the loss of a US Air Force B-29 in the region of Vladivostok and requested any information.

And as it turns out, a witness was found. From Nakhodka. He is Boris Ivanovich Pasynok, a native of Zaporozh'e, and a 40 year resident of our city. Recently he met with representatives of the Commission in the city museum. After several days, correspondents of this paper heard about those distant events from Boris Ivanovich himself.

"During the period from 1951 to 1953 I served a tour of duty on Askol'd Island. I was a coastal defense mechanic at a naval base of the Pacific Fleet. It was during the "Cold Summer", on 29 July 1953. My duty watch at an underground concrete bunker was from 0400 to 0800 hours. At that time the soldiers and the command were sleeping. But not all of them. It was during that time that an enormous aircraft accompanied by our fighters approached from Putyatin Island, which is located nearer to the mainland than Askol'd Island. On this "flying fortress" I saw a white star on a black background, the emblem of the US Air Force. It then became clear: this was an American airplane and it had clearly violated Soviet air space. They tried to force the enemy aircraft to land at our base.

The burning B-29, escorted on two sides by fighters, never-the-less did not want to surrender and even tried to escape. The aircraft did not respond to the command to land. It crashed into the water.

That day I informed my command about the sighting. They in turn told me that these were simple exercises. In "Boevaya Vakhta" [a local military paper] it stated that, "An American airplane violated Soviet airspace and disappeared in the direction of the ocean." There was no excitement about it on base.

Reviewed by DPMO
IAW 50 USC 435 Note & DOD 5400.7-R
Date 5 Dec 99 Initials WSD

I decided not to tell my fellow sailors about it. Not long before this I had put my foot in my mouth. On that occasion a sailor I was chatting with told me that he had just heard on the military radio station that Beria had been declared an enemy of the people. I relayed this fact to my boss and almost ended up in front of a tribunal. He hadn't yet heard about the events in Moscow. Later they closed the library to tear Lavrentia Beria's picture out of the books and encyclopedias.

In the morning I noticed that at the point where the B-29 had gone down they had gathered sea planes from the Bay of Rechitsa, mine sweepers, and an "okhotnik". That signified that they were trying to find the airmen. They didn't find them. Furthermore, the following day there was a strange incident at the base. A radar operator, a petty officer, who was on duty when the aircraft crossed the border, had missed the plane and decided to commit suicide. He used a PPsh submachine gun. He was never-the-less given treatment."

At the meeting of the witness with James MacDougall there was no discussion about Trawler-423 which supposedly picked up the American crew from the crash area. Apparently the investigators were confused as a result of the similarity between the Russian words "trauler" and "tral'shchik" (a military vessel). Such military vessels are designated by numerals.

"What were the Americans most interested in?"

"They continually asked me whether or not the American aircraft violated our border. The headquarters of the TOF [Pacific Fleet] gave them a map of that region with symbols. I told them in detail about the position changes of the B-29. I showed them photos of Askol'd from that time. Moreover, my information agreed with the observation points on the fleet maps. The representatives of the Commission also said that of the 16 crew members 2 were rescued, one perished, and the fate of the thirteen remaining was unknown. It was for their sake, by the way, that the search was being conducted." [photo]

Aleksandr SYRTsOV

In the photos: Boris Ivanovich Pasynok in the summer of 1953, The lighthouse on Askol'd Island.